

30 Theses in Defence of Trotskyism

Thu, 30/04/1992 - 22:00

These theses began life in the discussion period in the 1980s in various Trotskyist tendencies and were updated and republished in the early 90s. Where there have been subsequent changes of position they are indicated in a foot note.

1 The collapse of the degenerate workers? states, the weakening of Stalinist parties in the capitalist countries and the pro-imperialist settlements in South Africa, the Middle East and the Far East will have far-reaching consequences for the world proletariat. In Latin America and Africa, imperialism is pursuing its policy of militarised democracy and severe austerity programmes.

The death agony of Stalinism has led to the collapse of totalitarian dictatorships in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The working class has won important democratic liberties which give it better conditions it to think, organise and fight. But due to the absence of a revolutionary leadership it has developed democratic and even pro-capitalist illusions. A series of counter-revolutionary governments have come to power with mass support, even with mass working class support. These governments have inaugurated a series of restorationist programmes which attack the historic gains as well as the immediate conditions of the working class. But except in the former GDR these measures have not yet resulted in the final downfall of the workers? states. Working class experience of these attacks and growing disillusion with bourgeois parliamentarism and the market economy will mark the coming period.

The only way to defend workers? conditions and save the historic gains originating from the October Revolution is to carry out a proletarian political revolution. This will have to be directed against the new restorationist governments as well as the remaining Stalinist regimes. The objective conditions for solving the crisis of leadership that afflicts the new workers? movements of Eastern Europe and the USSR are developing. The task of revolutionaries is to address themselves with the greatest urgency to resolving the crisis of the subjective factor.

Only the successful resolution of the crisis of leadership can open the road to the socialist revolution on a world scale. Yet those organisations which claim the banner of Trotskyism are in profound disarray. Some are either secretly dismayed by the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorship and are retreating into profound pessimism, questioning the most basic elements of Trotskyism (United Secretariat of the Fourth International-USFI). Others are incapable of looking reality in the face and offering any programmatic response to the masses beyond that of cheering on the existing movement and the existing leadership (International Workers? League (IWL/LIT), Fourth International International Centre of Reconstruction (FI-ICR of Pierre Lambert), Committee for a Workers? International (CWI-Militant-GB), International Socialist Organisation (ISO-SWP-GB). Others take refuge in timeless abstract socialist formulas, hoping that the working class will spontaneously find its way to its new leadership like the International Communist Union (ICU-Lutte Ouvriere). Revolutionaries all over the world have a duty to re-examine the nature of revolutionary politics and the decisive lessons of the last 50 years of international class struggle. The first question that has to be answered is how the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International degenerated and fragmented.

2 The Fourth International definitively sank into centrism at the Third Congress of 1951 and disintegrated as a centralised International in 1953. From this date the Fourth International ceased to exist. In its place federations of centrist groupings have continued to survive.

Despite the errors and accommodations of certain sections the collapse of the Fourth International was not due to any betrayal of revolutionary internationalism during the Second World War, but rather due to a disorientation caused by the outcome of the war. and a false re-adjustment of programme and tactics between 1948 and 1951. A series of events falsified Trotsky's perspective and prognosis for the post-war period: the triumph of the 'democratic' imperialist bourgeoisies and the Kremlin bureaucracy in World War Two; the overthrow of capitalism in Eastern Europe and the triumph of the Chinese Stalinists; and the subsequent stabilisation of capitalism. The leaders of the Fourth International: Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank, Gerry Healy and James P Cannon, were unable to correct Trotsky's perspective and re-elaborate the programme to take account of these developments. In the name of preserving Trotsky's 1939-40 perspective of breakdown and collapse for capitalism, bourgeois democracy and Stalinism, they revised the strategic and tactical method of Trotsky. They maintained that the post-war perspective remained one of imminent catastrophe. Sanctifying Trotsky's erroneous perspective they revised his most important programmatic contributions. Events appeared to falsify a literal and dogmatic interpretation of Trotsky's characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary: How was it possible for Tito and Mao to overthrow capitalism? The pioneering capitulation came in 1948 when, following the Tito-Stalin split, the International Secretariat hailed Tito as a centrist and Yugoslavia as a workers' state needing no political revolution.

Thereafter, the Fourth International leadership analysed Stalinism's bureaucratic overturns of capitalism in such a way as to draw a qualitative distinction between those in most of Eastern Europe and those in Yugoslavia and thereafter in China. The former were explained as being due to the expansion of the original workers' state and thus entailing no recognition of a revolutionary role for Stalinism. Yugoslavia and China presented the real problem: if Stalinism remained counter-revolutionary then the CPs which led the revolutions in these countries could not be Stalinist. A theory had to be developed to explain how they had transformed themselves.

Pablo and the International leadership impressionistically understood the outbreak of the Cold War to mean that a combined Third World War and revolution was approaching. The weakness of the Fourth International was unimportant because the tasks of the revolutionary party would be carried out by the objective process. The coming economic crisis-war-revolution would transform Stalinist, social democratic and petit bourgeois nationalist parties into centrist parties capable of making revolutions and creating workers' states which, despite their deformations, were superior to the degenerated Soviet state.

In the name of avoiding sectarian isolation, the programme of Trotskyism was reduced to a historic icon and replaced by a systematic accommodation to Stalinism, social democracy and petit bourgeois or bourgeois nationalism. This centrist method was codified in the main theses and resolutions of the Third World Congress in 1951, and the subsequent leaders of the major currents subscribed to these positions. Shortly after the Congress the new centrist line was tested in the fire of the Bolivian Revolution. The Bolivian section, the POR, which had considerable influence amongst the strategic mining proletariat, supported the installation of the bourgeois nationalist MNR government. Allowing for the Fourth International's small size, this was a betrayal similar to the Comintern's support for Chiang Kai Shek in the Chinese Revolution of 1926-8. Yet no section within the Fourth International opposed this.

The Fourth International did not split or fragment due to these events, nor due to a belated yet principled fight against revisionism. Conflict arose from the logical carrying through of the tactic associated with

pressuring the Stalinists, social democrats and nationalists: entrism of a special type (*sui generis*). Unlike Trotsky's 'French Turn', this tactic required the sections to enter Stalinist, Social Democratic and 'petit bourgeois' nationalist parties and create 'centrist currents' with centrist policies, not revolutionary factions. It was not this method per se that provoked resistance. Rather it was the prospect and fear of entry into Stalinist parties by those sections which had already adapted to trade union bureaucracies and to social democratic or even bourgeois nationalist parties.

The 'International Committee' (IC) revolt by Bleibtreu, Cannon, Healy, Nahuel Moreno and Pierre Lambert was fatally flawed. It built into its foundations the centrist method of the 1951 positions vis-à-vis Stalinism and other alien class forces. Further, the SWP bounced the IC groups into deserting the Fourth International before its Fourth Congress, reflecting a profound national centred, federal approach to the whole question of the International. The IC failed to deepen its very partial critique into a revolutionary analysis. It rested content with attacking 'Pabloism'. It utterly refused to re-constitute a democratic centralist Trotskyist international counterposed to Pablo and Mandel's pseudo-Fourth International. Whereas the IS was Stalinophile, the IC was Stalinophobic. In Latin America, they liquidated their organisation into the forces of the national bourgeoisie. In Argentina, for example, Moreno carried out an even more rightist policy than that of the IS representative, Juan Posadas. The thread of revolutionary continuity was broken.

The Fourth International no longer exists and has not existed for over a third of a century. We reject the view that it exists like some mystical essence through its fragments, or that today's warring centrist federations constitute a 'family of Trotskyism' or a 'world Trotskyist movement'.

Likewise we reject the national isolationist method that the FI should not have been built, was a desperate gamble, and that internationals can only be built by federating 'strong national sections' (ICU, ISO). We reject the idea that the 'Fourth International' is in crisis because it is not sufficiently proletarian, as Lutte Ouvrière claim. We also reject the vulgar sociological approach of Ramos (PORE-Spain), who declared the Fourth International 'rebuilt' in 1976 (it subsequently fragmented and dissolved itself) and today wants to reunite what it designates the 'proletarian' fragments of the Fourth International (Moreno's PST, Guillermo Lora's POR, Jorge Altamira's Partido Obrero) against the petit bourgeois elements (Mandel and the USFI). This workerism reflects an opportunist pragmatism and a scorn for an intransigent revolutionary fight for theory, programme and principles.

3 The key question for revolutionary regroupment is that of the revolutionary programme.

In the question of the international as in the question of parties we stand by Trotsky's injunction 'programme first!' An international world party of social revolution must, and in our epoch can only, be built on the basis of an international programme. Trotsky's Transitional Programme was based on the lessons of the immediately preceding decades and the experience of the Russian Revolution and of the revolutionary Comintern. It overcame the gap between immediate and socialist demands. In addition to this methodological advance, it extended the Marxist programme to cover the new task of combating the bureaucratic degeneration of a workers' state. The Transitional Programme combined perspectives and programme, strategy and tactics into a revolutionary whole.

More than fifty years on, our programme again needs to be extended and developed using the fundamental method and doctrine of the 1938 document. Only hopeless sectarians or cynical opportunists could maintain that a programme written over half a century ago could be sufficient to guide us in all today's conditions. Are there no lessons to be learned from the massive expansion of Stalinism and from its death agony? Does the transformation of the colonial empires into four decades of a semi-colonial system have nothing to teach us? Do the emergence of mass movements of the socially oppressed not

create new problems and new opportunities?

We are opposed to the revision of the fundamental method and demands of the Transitional Programme, or its conversion into a set of abstract principles which have no application to the class struggle. Lenin did not build the Third International solely on the basis of the Communist Manifesto and Leon Trotsky did not found the Fourth International on the basis of the first four congresses of the Comintern alone. These correct and essential documents were no longer sufficient to explain the new phenomena or to select and train new cadres and sections. New programmes had to be re-elaborated.

Despite formal adherence to the Transitional Programme, Trotsky's epigones have, in their practice, thoroughly revised it. The USFI and IC traditions reprinted the Transitional Programme but never utilised its methods and demands. Other tendencies (ISO, UCI) frankly discarded it and rejected some of its basic pillars (transitional demands, the united front or the class character of the degenerate workers' states, etc), returning to a caricature of the economism and spontaneism of the early 1900s.

The necessary leadership (national and international) will be forged in the fight to develop such an international revolutionary programme and win the masses to it. Such a leadership is essential for the founding of a democratic centralist revolutionary international. To re-establish a real methodological continuity with Trotsky's Fourth International requires a critique of the errors and crimes of his epigones since 1951, not for historical curiosity, but so such errors can be avoided and the entire rotten method uprooted.

4 In the imperialist epoch the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution cannot be resolved in the historic interests of the toiling masses except under the leadership of the proletariat.

The proletariat cannot restrict its class struggle to a 'democratic stage' involving the resolution of the agrarian question, the ending of national oppression or disunity and the achievement of full democratic rights and liberties. Only the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, in alliance with all the oppressed classes and strata, can ensure that these questions are resolved. The slogan of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' is obsolete. Its revival by 'left' Stalinists or ex-'Trotskyists' (SWP-USA) only prepares a Menshevik noose for the working class. The objective necessity of the revolution in permanence must, however, be translated into a conscious strategy by the proletarian party. Centrist Trotskyists of both the IS (Pablo, Mandel) and IC (Healy, SWP-US, Lambert, Moreno) traditions have turned permanent revolution into an objective process which uses differing leaderships, Stalinist, petit bourgeois nationalist or centrist, to achieve its ends. The inevitable result has been the capitulation of the proletarian vanguard to alien class forces.

The political and organisational independence of the revolutionary party from bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism must be fought for in all phases of the struggle. The experience of the Kuomintang and all subsequent bourgeois nationalist parties and fronts in the semi-colonial and colonial countries has shown the absolute necessity of the revolutionary party and of its complete organisational and political independence from all forms of bourgeois and petit bourgeois nationalism.

We condemn as unprincipled the political support given to such movements by the centrist FI. The International as a whole did this with regard to the MNR during the Bolivian revolution of 1952 and thereafter the different centrist fragments repeated this method; thus, in Algeria, the IS capitulated towards the FLN and the IC towards the MNA). In the 1950s the IC section, the Morenoites assimilated to Peronism in Argentina and Belaundism in Peru. The USFI has made similar adaptations: in Cuba with regard to the Castroites, in El Salvador (FMLN), in Iran (Khomeini), in Grenada (NJM) and in Ireland (IRA). The Healyites used the same method to adapt to the PLO, Khomeini, Gaddafi and the Ba'athists. The USFI, by the LIT, by the IC and the FI-ICR all tailed and adapted themselves to the FSLN.

5 The proletarian vanguard must seek unity in action with petit bourgeois or even bourgeois forces, whenever or wherever they are in actual combat against imperialism's military, political or economic oppression and exploitation of the semi-colonial and colonial countries.

As long as imperialism supports or installs regimes compliant with its wishes in the semi-colonial countries and as long as it economically exploits them, broad strata of non-proletarian classes, the peasantry and the urban petit bourgeois, will be driven into struggle around slogans of nationalism and democracy. Even sections of the indigenous exploiting classes and their military and ideological representatives may, from time to time, be driven to oppose this or that action of imperialism despite the fact that in general these classes act as agents for imperialism within their respective countries. When battle is joined between these nationalist forces and imperialism or its local agents the proletariat cannot remain neutral, it has to engage in and indeed initiate joint actions against imperialism. At the same time it must maintain its absolute class independence, observing the principle 'march separately-strike together'. The Leninist position of 'unconditional but critical support' means unconditional support for all those fighting against imperialism combined with the duty to politically combat the overall strategy and methods of struggle of these movements.

We defend the tactic used by Lenin, Trotsky and the revolutionary Comintern, the anti-imperialist united front. But we reject the opportunist distortions of this tactic that aim at creating popular fronts with the 'anti-imperialist' bourgeoisie up to and including forming 'popular' or democratic-bourgeois governments. This distortion is not only typical of the Stalinists but also of various 'Trotskyist' fragments. All of the Fourth Internationalist groups in Bolivia, for example, supported 'co-government' between the COB and the MNR in 1952, the CODEP in 1965-66 and the FRA in 1971-72. We reject the concept of a strategic bloc with the national bourgeoisie in the semi-colonial world. Partido Obrero (Altamira) of Argentina has a policy of 'The FI-IC offer electoral support to bourgeois forces calling on them to form a government and suspend payment of the external debt.' United action must not be a pretext for the confusion of programmes. The proletariat can never give political support to a bourgeois government nor set itself the object of installing one. It must never renounce its objective of establishing its own class rule. Tactical alliances must not become strategic ones, that is, popular fronts. The working class must reject the deceitful slogans and ideology of nationalism and populism (Sun Yat Senism, Arab nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Sandinism etc.

The answer to the centrists' abandonment of an elementary class standpoint is not to reject the anti-imperialist united front tactic.

Sectarian rejection of the anti-imperialist united front is generally the other side of the coin of opportunist or pro-imperialist positions. The international Spartacist tendency (iSt 'today International Communist League' ICL) and its splinter groups refused to support Argentina or Iran when these countries were at war with imperialism or with its puppets. But at the same time, the iSt maintains illusions in the non-bourgeois character of the Nicaraguan state. The LIT's criticism of the anti-imperialist united front is only an orthodox cover for its own participation in democratic or popular fronts, or worse, entry into openly bourgeois parties (Peronism or Belaundism).

6 The only workers' and peasants' government which it is possible for communists to give political support to, or under certain circumstances to participate in, is one which emerges out of a period of victorious mass struggles and is based on armed working class and peasant organs of struggle.

It must be a government committed to defending the workers' organisations and solving the political and economic crisis at the expense of the bourgeoisie. The most elementary programme of such a government must consist of arming the proletariat, disarming the counter-revolutionary bourgeois organisations, expropriating all capitalists who sabotage production, installing workers' supervision over production and ensuring that the burden of taxation falls on the rich not on the workers and peasants. It must actively

support the struggles of workers and peasants internationally, seeking to spread the revolution.

We reject the concept that a workers' and peasants' government distinct from the government of a revolutionary Bolshevik majority is a necessary or inevitable stage on the road to the proletarian dictatorship. The exceptional circumstances in which left reformist or centrist forces might be forced to install a government independent of the bourgeoisie and transitional to the proletarian dictatorship does not mean that we set such a goal at the apex of our programme. Such a government will, if it is not rapidly replaced by a communist-led administration, either itself move to the right and attack the working class or fall victim to an attack from counter-revolutionary forces.

We also reject the identification of the workers' government slogan with the call for the formation of governments of reformist parties or unions. Whilst it is legitimate to call on the masses to put the reformist leaders to the test of government, we always explain that such a government would be bourgeois in its policies and actions. Centrists have mistakenly claimed that a normal parliamentary administration can carry out socialist policies (FI-ICR, Healyism, CWI) or that trade union bodies can create a proletarian dictatorship ('COB or Solidarnosc to power' in Bolivia and Poland respectively, as advanced by the POR(Lora) or the LIT).

In revolutionary situations, where mass workers' organisations exist, it is necessary to call upon and mobilise the workers to force them to take the power. But at the same time we must expose their counter-revolutionary programme, announce that we will constitute an opposition and make clear that our support is limited to defending them against reaction.

We reject the LIT's use of the call for governments of popular fronts without capitalists (e.g. the IU in Argentina or the FSLN) as a synonym for the workers' and peasants' government. We reject the call for bourgeois 'left' governments (FI-ICR), or for governments based on a capitalist constituent assembly (USFI, LIT, FI-ICR in Peru 1978). We also reject the LIT's call for a government of the 'Comando del No' with Patricio Alwyn in Chile. We condemn any call for governments which are not workers' governments.

We fight for the overthrow of the entire capitalist class. We cannot link our call for the overthrow of a particular cabinet or bourgeois president to the formation of a new bourgeois government. In Peru the FI-ICR want to replace Fujimori with a new government from a parliament dominated by neo-liberals. In Argentina the LIT want to replace the president with a candidate drawn from the bourgeois congress. We condemn the entry of worker ministers into any bourgeois government. It is impossible to change the nature of the bourgeois state by putting ministers into a bourgeois government. We condemn Lora's attempts to join the 1952 and 1970s Bolivian bourgeois nationalist cabinets, Politica Obrera's call for a Peronist workers' cabinet alongside the Campora presidency in 1973, etc.

We completely reject the characterisation of a government which is openly committed to defending 'mixed economy' capitalism and which attacks workers' organisations and the right to strike, as a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government. We thus reject the USFI's designation of the Sandinista government as having been a 'proletarian dictatorship'. Such a characterisation is both absurd and reactionary. Even after the transferral of power to the right wing UNO government of Violeta Chamorro in the 1990 elections, the USFI continue to maintain this absurd fiction because the Sandinistas continue to control the army high command. The USFI are oblivious to the fact that Sandinista general Ortega declared his loyalty to the UNO government and has attacked those fighting to maintain the gains of the 1979 revolution.

7 It is necessary to mobilise the masses under transitional and immediate slogans corresponding to the concrete situation in each country.

The transitional programme consists of an interlinked series of demands which, in their entirety, constitute an overt and direct challenge to capitalist rule. These demands address the fundamental objective needs of the masses. Their validity is not dependent on their acceptability to the reformist consciousness of the masses, nor are they invalidated if the capitalist or bureaucrats are forced to grant them. Transitional demands seek to organise the masses independently of the open political representatives of the bourgeoisie and their reformist agents within the labour bureaucracy. Each transitional demand embodies a fight for some element of direct workers' control over the capitalists or the Stalinist bureaucracy. Transitional demands are both the means of transition from today's immediate struggles to a revolutionary assault on the whole capitalist regime or bureaucratic dictatorship and they are a means of educating and organising workers in the tasks of the transition to socialism itself.

But revolutionaries are not sectarians: we fight for minimum demands, and in every partial struggle we are the most thorough and most meticulous tacticians and organisers. We stand in the front line trenches of every struggle of the working class, no matter how partial: it would be false to counterpose the transitional programme to the existing struggles of the masses. It is a centrist distortion of the transitional programme to separate individual demands from the interlinked system and present them as thinly disguised isolated trade union demands. Similarly any attempt to present transitional demands as 'structural reforms' (USFI) of capitalism is grossly opportunist. We reject the method of the CWI which presents transitional demands to the working class as good reforms winnable under capitalism but, in the privacy of its own meetings, declares that if these demands are fought for and won then capitalism will be overthrown. We oppose the centrist distortion of the workers' control element of transitional demands into joint participation schemes with the bosses (workers' co-ops, autogestion on the Pablo model, Lora's majority co-gestion, workers' plans on the model advanced by the USFI for the Lucas engineering company in Britain). We oppose the 'Third period' ultimatism which characterised the SLL/WRP and the POR(Lora). Centristism treats the programme as a box of tricks all of which can be played on the working class in order to help build the sect. Tactics are separated from principles. Principles become dogma, tactics become opportunist adaptation to alien class forces and their programmes. The very purpose of transitional demands is to mobilise the masses against capitalism. The task of the revolutionary vanguard, therefore, is to use particular demands in the immediate struggles of the masses within the context of a fight for the programme as a whole.

8 Where the ruling classes attempt to deny democratic rights we mobilise around revolutionary democratic slogans.

Transitional demands must be supplemented by revolutionary democratic demands whenever there is a struggle against the remnants of pre-capitalist agrarian relations, against national oppression or against openly pro-imperialist dictatorship (Bonapartism-both military and civilian, fascism and all anti-democratic methods of rule within parliamentary democracies). Key revolutionary democratic demands include support for the struggle for democracy, for the constituent assembly, for liberties of the press, trade union rights or other kinds of democratic slogans. Revolutionary democratic demands retain their full force even against left Bonapartist regimes (e.g. FSLN, Velasco, Nasser), wherever these regimes restrict the freedom of organisation and action of the working class and the progressive petit bourgeoisie. We reject the method which sees the struggle for democratic demands as synonymous with the struggle for workers' power. This method presents the achievement of a democratic constituent assembly as the strategic path to establishing a workers' and peasants' government (FI-ICR, USFI and LIT in Peru 1978-80; FI-ICR world-wide today).

9 The crowning slogan of the programme of transitional demands is the call for workers' councils (soviets). Workers' councils draw in representatives of all those groups and strata fighting for the revolution, and co-ordinate the struggles of these groups. They are the highest organisational form of the class struggle and

are embryonic organs of working class power. The fight for workers' or workers' and peasants' councils remains a central task in revolutionary situations. These bodies must draw in the organised proletariat and the oppressed strata, the unemployed, the sub-proletariat and the impoverished petit bourgeoisie, women workers and housewives, shanty town organisations and tenants' groups, peasant organisations, poor peasants and agricultural proletarians as well as the rank and file soldiers. They must organise on the basis of the widest democracy with complete freedom for all parties which enjoy the support of the toiling masses with the exception of fascist parties. During an open conflict with the class enemy we would propose the exclusion of those parties or their delegates which flout or sabotage the decisions of the workers' councils and those actively involved in spying and other counter-revolutionary activities.

Where other embryonic forms of proletarian state power exist which can embrace the mass of the exploited and oppressed (e.g. the factory committees in Germany 1923) we do not counterpose the building of workers' councils. Rather we strive to extend these embryonic forms into real workers' councils, as with the self-management committees and Solidarnosc committees in Poland in 1981 or the the trade union rank and file committees in Bolivia in 1985.

Attempts to find a substitute for workers' or workers' and peasants' councils inevitably leads to a capitulation to alien class forces (e.g. in Poland 1981, the USFI adapted to Solidarnosc and its second parliamentary chamber strategy; they had previously made a similar adaptation to the MFA in Portugal in 1974-5). We reject the position that organs of 'popular power' can be substitutes for workers' and peasants' councils where these organs are thinly disguised, powerless transmission belts for left Bonapartist regimes, for example Communal Councils of Nicaragua and Grenada (1979-83), where they are based on delegates nominated by trade union federations (1971 Bolivian Peoples' Assembly) or are bureaucratised and with limited mass support (Peruvian ANP). We reject the classification of primarily trade union organisations as substitute workers' councils (Solidarnosc or the Bolivian COB outside of the 1952 revolutionary situation). The classification of existing bureaucratised trade union bodies as workers' councils has been used by the LIT, FI(ICR), Politica Obrera and the POR-Lora/Altamira as a way of avoiding the fight for workers' councils in order to avoid confronting the reformist trade union leaders.

We reject the idea that 'popular assemblies' made up of delegates chosen by the trade union bureaucracy or cabildos hegemonised by them or by representatives of the bourgeois or petit bourgeois parties can be characterised as workers' councils. Only bodies elected by the rank and file of the workers, peasants and the urban poor merit this characterisation. In 1971, the POR(Lora), the Lambertists, Politica Obrera(Altamira), and Varga all made such an adaptation to the Bolivian People's Assembly (Varga called it the first workers' council in Latin America). The USFI, LIT and the FI-ICR characterised the Peruvian Popular National Assembly as the embryo of a new state, demanding all power be granted to it. If these bodies are not simply a bureaucratic diversion revolutionaries demand that they are transformed into workers' councils through election by rank and file assemblies, that their delegates be accountable and immediately recallable by their electors, that they form armed workers' militias etc.

10 We defend the Leninist-Trotskyist strategy of armed insurrection. This is the only way that the working class can take power into the hands of its councils. For the insurrection to succeed the revolutionary party must win the support of the peasants, the urban poor and the rank and file of the army.

The only way to defeat the bourgeois army is to accelerate the class struggle between the rank and file soldiers and NCOs, and the officer corps. We fight for political and trade union rights inside the army and police force, with the aim of creating soldiers' councils allied to the workers' movement. We reject the political support given to left Bonapartist coup-makers by Posadas, the USFI and Lora. We reject the current policy of the POR(Lora) which is aimed at winning a whole sector of the officer corps by demanding

higher salaries for officers, the 'nationalisation' of the army and the recreation of the 'true national frontiers' (ie the restoration of previous annexations by neighbouring countries).

We fight for militias of the workers, poor peasants and the petit bourgeoisie. These could emerge from strike pickets or from self-defence committees against state repression or against large scale criminal activity. We have to resist all attempts by the bourgeois state to limit such militias or integrate them into the state. They have to be under the democratic control and mandate of rank and file assemblies and be expanded and centralised onto a regional and national level.

Trotskyists reject guerrilla warfare as a strategy because it isolates, politically and physically, the revolutionary fighters from the proletariat. Its methods, concentration of decisive forces in rural or urban guerrilla war, cannot be participated in by the mass of the working class. These methods easily degenerate into banditry in the countryside and individual terrorism in the cities. They objectively act as a provocation, giving the bourgeois state a pretext to smash the proletarian mass organisations. Some guerrilla organisations, especially of the Stalinist variety, (e.g. Sendero Luminoso) have used assassination and terror against the leaders of workers' organisations under the pretext of fighting reformism. Whilst Trotskyists must defend petit bourgeois revolutionaries against bourgeois state repression and may themselves tactically utilise subordinated guerrilla operations in circumstances where they will assist and not stand in contradiction to the mass struggles and armed militias of the working class, we completely reject the bankrupt guerrillaist strategy in all its varieties.

All guerilla based armies have had their main roots in classes other than the proletariat. The results of their struggles have been many and varied, but none has resulted in the creation of a healthy workers' state based on workers' councils. Some-for example the Colombian M-19, have compromised with, and surrendered to, the bourgeoisie. Other movements have led to bloody catastrophe for the urban and rural masses (Malaya in the 1950s, Indonesia in 1976, various countries in South America during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s, Kampuchea 1974-79). Others again have created Bonapartist nationalist regimes that later became pro-imperialist (Algeria, Angola). In exceptional circumstances (China, Vietnam, Cuba) they have resulted in the creation of a degenerate workers' state where the working class does not hold political power.

The Guevarist conception seeks to substitute an armed petit bourgeois elite, the foco, for the workers' party, workers' councils and militias. The Maoist 'people's war' strategy seeks to suppress the independence of the working class struggle, subordinating it to the peasantry and tying it to a Stalinist democratic stage. Both these strategies are popular frontist, seeking to share governmental power with a wing of the bourgeoisie. Certain Castroite groups have used guerrilla warfare to win themselves a place in bourgeois political life (FMLN, ELN, FARC). Despite its extreme sectarian radicalism, Sendero Luminoso's strategy is linked to the project of an alliance with native capitalists, especially in the coca growing areas. Despite our principled opposition to the guerrilla strategy we condemn any support for bourgeois repressive actions such as the LIT's letters of condolence to officers 'murdered' by the guerrillas during the seizure of the Tablada Barracks in Argentina in 1989, or the involvement of USFI leader Socorro Ramirez in the government's 'peace commission', which was used as a cover for the massacre of the guerrilla forces when they failed to surrender promptly.

We condemn the USFI's capitulation to this guerrillaist tendency, especially in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and that of the IC Latin American sections in the early 1960s. We condemn the USFI's continued equivocation on this question, namely its effective endorsement of the guerrillaist strategies of the ANC, Philippines Communist Party, IRA, ETA and others.

11 We are for systematic communist fraction work in the proletarian mass organisations, especially the

trade unions.

We are for the construction of alliances of rank and file militants to oust the reformist bureaucrats in the struggle to democratise the trade unions, turn them into fighting industrial unions and unite them into one big union confederation. Communists must struggle for revolutionary leadership with the avowed aim of transforming the trade unions into organs of struggle against capitalism.

We reject the tactic of building organisations which act primarily as electoral machines for left talking candidates but fail to transform the unions themselves into real organs of struggle (USFI), or of burrowing away within the unions and gaining positions of leadership without fighting for , or even revealing, ?Trotskyist? politics (PCI-Lambert). We reject the building of ?class struggle left wings? which are aimed primarily at winning over ?left? bureaucrats by curbing criticisms of their vacillations, errors and betrayals. We reject the syndicalist approach to rank and file movements which merely tails the immediate demands of the workers and rejects the key task of mobilising rank and file workers for struggle around transitional demands and under the leadership of the communists.

In the unions and workplaces, we fight for workers? control over the production process and against the bosses? attempts to manage production in their interests. Workplace organisations, including factory committees, have a vital role to play in this struggle. But we also reject a syndicalist-style counterposition of rank and file or base committees to national trade unions as such or to centralised leadership in the unions. Such a position has been taken up by some ?Trotskyists?, especially with regards to the Coordinations in France and the Cobas movement in Italy. We reject any mimicking of the Stalinist Third Period policy of forming red unions out of the minority of militant or revolutionary workers. The forerunner of Lutte Ouvrière adopted this line following the Renault strike of 1947, today they tend to set up their own local and even national strike committees and counterpose them to the unions (1987 railway strike, 1988 health strike).

Communists should stand for the maintenance of trade union unity so as not to be excluded from the masses of reformist workers by the bureaucracy. Of course, if the democratically chosen leaders of workers are expelled by the reformist bureaucrats for leading struggles, we are in favour of union branches defying the leaders up to and including forming a new union. But we defend ourselves against the reformists? charge of having split the union?s strength by proposing unity in action and re-unification of the unions on a democratic basis.

12 The popular front implies the surrender of working class interests and of the proletariat?s fighting capacity to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Far from fighting fascism or reaction it prostrates the proletariat before them.

Stalinist and social democratic parties are willing to form electoral pacts or governmental coalitions with openly bourgeois parties. Stalinism systematised this policy with the strategy of the popular front. This ?noose around the neck of the proletariat? is disastrous in all situations and especially so in a pre-revolutionary or revolutionary situation (France 1936, Spain 1936-39, Chile 1973 etc). Revolutionaries must give no political support to a popular front but must fight within the mass workers? organisations for a break with the bourgeoisie and all its parties. Revolutionaries must use the varied tactics of the workers? united front to aid the breaking up of the ?people?s front? with the bourgeoisie. This may necessitate entering mass base organs of a popular front and fighting to expel the bourgeois parties. However, we reject entry by revolutionary organisations into the bourgeois parties themselves.

Only firmness in principle but flexibility in tactics can avoid either adaptation or self-isolation. We defend all democratic rights of the masses against military, Bonapartist or fascist coup d?états. Where an ?anti-imperialist? regime finds itself under attack by the pro-imperialist military, a temporary united front with

forces defending it will be necessary unless the working class is in a situation to take power immediately. In such circumstances, faced with an imminent putsch we would not agitate for the immediate overthrow of such governments, whilst insisting on this as a strategic necessity. But, as with the case of the Bolsheviks and the Kornilov Coup, this tactic must not express confidence or political support for such governments or the abandonment of the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government.

13 Fascism is not just any form of bourgeois reaction, any military or Bonapartist regime. It is a movement of the plebeian classes, the reactionary petit bourgeoisie and the lumpenproletariat, maddened by a deep and prolonged political and economic crisis of capitalism and the inability of the proletariat to resolve it because of its reformist or centrist misleadership. This movement is utilised by the bourgeoisie to smash the workers' movement and atomise the proletariat.

The answer to fascism is not a separate struggle or stage of 'anti-fascism' or 'the defence of democracy'. Revolutionaries must defend the democratic rights of the masses but not the 'democratic right' of the bourgeoisie to exploit the workers. The only strategic answer to fascism is the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. The anti-fascist struggle can and must be the beginning of an uninterrupted struggle for workers' power.

Revolutionaries should always argue: no platform for fascists. It is neither possible nor permissible to conduct a dialogue with fascism. Fascism threatens the very existence of the workers' organisations. We have to explain the importance of smashing fascism to all class conscious workers. We fight for a workers' united front against fascism, including the unions and the workers' parties, however reformist. We fight to bring into this united front the mass organisations of the national minorities, the racially and sexually oppressed and even any religious minorities singled out for persecution and pogrom by the fascist bands. The genuinely popular strata of students, the petit bourgeoisie and the sub-proletariat can also find their place in such a united front. We fight for the creation of an armed workers' militia that can take defensive and offensive action against the armed hirelings of capital. Through such a united front we seek to smash the fascists and to expose the reformist and centrist leaders, to deprive them of the support of the masses and to win the proletariat and its allies to the struggle for power. We condemn the tactics of groups like the Militant and the SWP in Britain or the LCR (USFI), the PCI (FI-ICR) and Lutte Ouvrière in France who refuse to implement a no platform position or who promote or support popular front style 'anti-fascist campaigns' (Anti-Nazi League or SOS Racisme).

14 Democratic institutions, parliaments, municipal councils, etc, are part of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Their purpose is to deceive the masses that the exploiters' rule is 'the government of the people, by the people, for the people'. Revolutionaries participate in elections whilst the masses still entertain illusions in them, to shatter these illusions and to prepare the overthrow of the bourgeois state including its parliamentary institutions.

We reject the policy of the USFI, the FI(ICR) and the LIT that treat bourgeois parliaments or constituent assemblies as if they were workers' councils or could be persuaded to act like workers' councils, as they did in Peru in 1978. Wherever materially possible revolutionaries put forward candidates on their full action programme for working class power. They reject with contempt the arguments of the centrists and reformists that this breaks 'the united front against reaction' or that they should subscribe to an immediate, practical programme of reforms. Nor do we support the drawing up of confused centrist programmes by blocs of small sects. Wherever the forces of revolutionary communism are too weak to stand candidates, and the masses still put their confidence in reformist or centrist workers' parties, we can utilise the tactic of giving critical support to such candidates at the polls. We do not express any political support for their programme or the slightest confidence in their future actions in government. We mobilise

the workers to put class demands on their leaders and to resist their attacks when and if they become the bourgeois government. In any forced choice between rival reformist parties we do not ask which of them has the 'best' programme but which has the strongest roots amongst the most combative and class conscious layers of the workers. Such support would be impermissible where the proletariat and its vanguard were in open and direct conflict with the reformist party and where the latter was seeking an electoral mandate to crush the workers.

This critical support for reformist and centrist workers' parties can never be extended to parties or presidential candidates of the bourgeoisie. We condemn the electoral support given to Paz-Estenssoro/Siles by the POR and the whole Fourth International in 1951. We equally reject the support given to Frondizi and Belaunde by Moreno in the 1950s, to the Argentinian UP by Politica Obrera (Altamira), to Cauatehmoc Cardenas in Mexico by the FI(ICR) and to the nakedly pro-imperialist politicians Aquino, Alwyn and Fujimori by the USFI or its sections. The only circumstances in which it is permissible to call for a vote for petit bourgeois parties is when they are actually leading a serious struggle against imperialism and where the election has the character of a referendum against imperialist rule or national oppression, or could act to block a reactionary settlement in a constituent assembly etc, (e. g. Northern Ireland, Namibia, Palestine).

We reject the anti-parliamentary cretinism typical of the anarchists but taken up by those like Lora in Bolivia after the POR's electoral fiasco in 1985. Active boycott campaigns are usually justified only in periods where the masses are mobilising for direct revolutionary struggle.

In no circumstances can we give critical support to a popular front list in a governmental election. A popular front is a class collaborationist coalition in which the mass workers' parties and/or the trade unions form an alliance with the parties of the bourgeoisie to support its programme and class power. Our tactic towards such popular fronts starts from the demand: workers' organisations break with the bourgeoisie! For this reason we reject the electoral support given to popular fronts by the centrist Trotskyists e. g. to the Chilean Popular Unity, the Uruguayan FA and the Brazilian FBP by the USFI and the LIT. Equally, however, we reject the sectarian position of refusing to vote for the candidates of a mass workers' party when it forms part of a popular front (iSt/ICL).

15 The social democratic and Stalinist parties in the imperialist countries are bourgeois parties; more specifically bourgeois workers' parties. Their leadership, programme and organisations have a bourgeois political character, but these parties are organically linked to the working class through their proletarian origins, through trade unions/co-operatives, or through mass working class membership or electoral support.

The united front tactic must be used to exploit the contradiction between the working class base and the leaders of these parties and to break the rank and file away from the reformist leaders and programme. We reject the views originating from 'Third Period' Stalinism, Bordigism and Maoism which see social democracy as a bourgeois party no different from the Christian Democratic or Conservative parties. This view rejects the united front tactic or allows for it only 'from below'. In all circumstances it is permissible to place demands on the established leaders of working class organisations. Where revolutionaries are not sufficiently strong to form an independent party and where the relative openness of the working class base of the reformist parties allows Trotskyists to fight openly for their politics, it is permissible and indeed desirable to carry out a revolutionary intervention.

Under certain conditions, extreme crisis and disintegration within the reformist parties or the formation of left centrist wings within them-Trotskyists may carry out a 'French Turn', that is, total entry on a relatively short term basis. Where such conditions do not prevail it is permissible for revolutionaries to carry out fraction work on a relatively long term basis, whereby an open organisation is maintained but a portion of the organisation enters the reformist party and carries out systematic work within it including united front

struggles, with the objective of building a revolutionary tendency inside the reformist party.

We reject the entry tactic as a strategy whereby Trotskyists conceal their real programme from the rank and file and enter into uncritical blocs with left reformists. This distortion of Trotskyism has been a central part of the practice of many of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International (LIT, IC, USFI etc). The task of Trotskyists is to constitute a revolutionary wing, not to disguise themselves as left reformists or centrists. It is possible to form united fronts with left reformists or centrists, but not propaganda blocks-separate banners, separate contingents. We reject as right centrist the notion that the reformist parties can be transformed into revolutionary parties, or that they can form governments ?pledged to socialist policies? which can abolish capitalism (e.g. Militant-GB). We also reject the sectarian abstentionist position that entry into the reformist parties is ipso facto liquidationist (SWP(GB), Lutte Ouvrière etc). This sectarianism, akin to that of Hugo Oehler which Trotsky had to combat in the mid-1930s, conceals a gnawing fear of their own insufficient political differentiation from reformism.

We reject the centrist tactic of setting up propaganda blocs, centrist or left reformist parties. Trotskyists stand by their programme and do not dilute it by building an organisation on a purely reformist programme (e. g. the various ?Workers? Parties? set up by the FI-ICR) or on the basis of demands selectively chosen from the programme of transitional demands but which exclude its crowning points: workers? councils, the workers? militia and the need for insurrection (e. g. the MAS and PO in Argentina). We also reject the slogan of building ?Revolutionary Fronts? like Moreno?s FUR or Lora and Altamira?s FRA , which are neither genuine united fronts, open to all mass workers organisations willing to fight together on a given issue or issues, nor are they the party the proletariat needs to make the revolution. Rather they are a criminal confusion of, and substitution for, both of these.

16 We reaffirm Trotsky?s position that Stalinism is a counter-revolutionary force within the world workers? movement.

The fact that Stalinist or Stalinised armies, parties or popular front movements were able to overthrow capitalism in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba does not invalidate Trotsky?s characterisation of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary nor does it prove that those who overthrew capitalism were not Stalinists. These overturns were qualitatively different from the October Revolution. They were bureaucratic social overturns that had an overall counter-revolutionary character: the working class was expropriated from political power from the outset and a parasitic caste blocked the use of the necessary political and economic weapons to advance towards socialism and world revolution. Without a political revolution the Stalinists inevitably led these states to collapse, even playing a key role in the restoration of capitalism.

Certain common features can be observed in the various Stalinist overturns. Firstly, the Stalinists gained a military victory over an enfeebled and discredited bourgeois regime. Decisive armed power fell into their hands. They then sought a popular front governmental alliance with bourgeois forces, even if they were only a shadow of the bourgeoisie rather than a significant fraction of it. The Stalinists sincerely proclaimed that they intended to preserve capitalism and defend it against the working class. The governments they formed were pro-capitalist, counter-revolutionary popular fronts if formed with bourgeois partners or reformist, counter-revolutionary workers? governments if formed alone or with social democratic partners. The former sometimes gave way to the latter. During this phase the Stalinists demobilised the working class movement, destroying or bureaucratising its independent class organisations, with the support of the local and world bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie, in turn, tried to remove the Stalinists from power by internal and external economic, political and military pressure, the Stalinists were obliged, in pure self-defence, to expel the remaining bourgeois political forces from the government. The state apparatus was then purged of all forces loyal to the capitalist class. Assured that the proletariat could make no

independent bid for power, a bureaucratic anti-capitalist workers' government expropriated the bourgeoisie and created a bureaucratically planned economy on the Soviet model with the aid of the pre-existing workers' states. Such workers' states are bureaucratically degenerate, like the USSR. The only qualitative difference lies in the method of their creation, capitalism was not overthrown by a healthy proletarian revolution and never replaced by a regime of workers' democracy organised in soviets.

The degenerate workers' state does not represent the embryonic form of a new mode of production as the bureaucratic collectivists claim. Those conceptions which argue that the forms of organisation of the degenerate workers' state are inherently progressive (USFI) are an adaptation to Stalinism. The degenerate workers' state contains gains which we defend, but which cannot, by definition, assure the welfare and prosperity of the masses. We reject those theories which argue that the USSR is some form of state capitalism (ISO) or a 'new class' (modern versions of Shachtmanism). Such analyses end up rejecting basic Marxist categories and cannot explain the current crisis of Stalinism. We reject the IC position that Cuba has always been a bourgeois state and that Castro was merely a Chiang Kai Shek. We also reject the idealist conception that only the USSR is a degenerate workers' state, the other Stalinist states being some form of capitalism (ICU). This view is completely undialectical, based on the notion that there can only be a workers' state, even degenerate, where there has been a workers' revolution. It is a recipe for impotence in intervening in other workers' states and cannot explain the fundamental identity of the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states.

17 Stalinism is the twin of social democracy, the 'agent of world imperialism within the workers' state' (Trotsky).

Stalinism's roots lie in the ruling bureaucracy within the workers' states. This bureaucracy has either usurped power from the proletarian vanguard or prevented it from taking power even where capitalist rule has been abolished. It blocks the road to the creation of socialism both within the workers' states and by sabotaging the international spread of the revolution. Its politics are those of class collaboration and nationalism. Stalinism's justification for its policy is the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. This reactionary and utopian creed has laid the basis for the various 'national(ist) roads to socialism' peddled by the Stalinist parties. It undermines the existence of the workers' states by preaching economic autarchy in the era of the world market. The case of Kampuchea reveals just how devastating this policy can be when it is taken to its logical conclusion. Other workers' states (Albania, Rumania, China) have suffered economic catastrophes as a result of pursuing this programme. Since the mid-1920s 'socialism in one country' has served the Soviet bureaucracy by subordinating the world revolution to the strategic and reactionary goal of 'peaceful co-existence' with world imperialism, a policy which has cost the lives of millions of workers. Under no circumstances can Stalinism play a socialist, revolutionary role.

The bureaucracy's parasitism and its dictatorship (in form no better than a fascist one) at first slow, then block, and finally reverse, the transition to socialism. The worst crime of Stalinist rule is that it liquidates the proletarian vanguard and atomises the worker and poor peasant masses. Through its brutal repression and its mismanagement of the planned economy it almost completely destroys the proletariat's confidence in its historic gains and its willingness to defend them. By usurping the prestige of the Leninist workers' state, the Stalinist bureaucracy sabotages the revolutionary struggles of the workers and peasants against capitalism and imperialism, supporting and then betraying them, treating them as bargaining counters with imperialism.

Nevertheless, for nearly half a century the bureaucracy was also obliged to defend, maintain, and even expand the workers' states as the basis of their own privileges and power. This embroiled the bureaucracy in a series of conflicts with the rapacious imperialist powers, which had never reconciled themselves to the existence of the workers' states.

Out of this dual role comes a dual tactic for the proletariat. Since the working class in all countries has a direct interest in the preservation of the historic gains, the planned property relations which were and are prerequisites for socialist construction, it is obliged to unconditionally defend these states against the forces of capitalist restoration. The only strategic way of saving the planned property relations is to remove the parasitic stratum that is leading them to inevitable collapse and to smash its dictatorship over the working class. Only workers' council democracy and a democratic plan can save the workers' states from destruction.

The essence of Stalinism is defined by the programme of 'socialism in one country' and a positive attitude to the degeneration of the USSR under Stalin. We reject the idea, originating in the Fourth International after the war, that Stalinism means loyalty to the Kremlin or to the ruling caste of one specific degenerate workers' state. The followers of the IC from Bleibetreu ('Where is Comrade Pablo Going?' 1951) to Altamira (Politica Obrera-Argentina) have maintained that CPs that break with Moscow cease to be Stalinist, creating the illusion that CPs have changed their counter-revolutionary nature, becoming progressive centrists or even revolutionaries. This position leads to the rejection of the political revolution and the denial of the Stalinist character of bureaucratic dictators such as Tito (FI), Mao (LIT, IC, USFI) or Castro (USFI, LIT, PO).

18 We reject 'Stalinophobia' - a differential hostility to Stalinism over social democracy or other alien class influences. With its emphasis on Stalinism's supposedly monolithic nature ('counter-revolutionary through and through?'), this policy has led to softness and accommodation to social democratic reformism. We also reject Stalinophilia, the notion that Stalinism has a 'dual nature?', that sometimes it acts in a revolutionary manner and sometimes in a counter-revolutionary manner, and that for specific stages or specific tasks (e.g. defence of the workers' states) it can be relied on or accorded a leading role.

After the war, the 'successes' of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and China, together with the outbreak of the 'cold war', led to Pablo's capitulationist theories. The world was divided into two 'camps' with Stalinism representing the proletariat. The political consequences involved centrist errors of perspective ('war-revolution?') and of programme (entrism sui generis and the abandonment of political revolution). This line has been continued by the IS/USFI and by some within the IC 'tradition'. The SLL/WRP adapted to Maoism during the 'Cultural Revolution', whilst the iSt tailed Moscow's bloody repression in Poland and Afghanistan during the 'second cold war' period, and bemoaned the loss of Stalinist power in East Germany and the USSR after 1989. The pressure of the cold war period and the brutal crushing by the Stalinists of workers' risings in East Germany and Hungary led the Stalinophobes, the FI-ICR, the Vargaites and in certain phases the LIT, to tail the existing leadership of the political revolution, even where this consisted of clerical reactionaries (Walesa) or open restorationists (Yeltsin). They one-sidedly interpret the defeat of Stalinism as a total victory for the working class, since the so-called 'chief prop of imperialism' within the working class has been destroyed, opening the way to revolutionary advance.

Stalinism's internal contradictions arise from its origins in the degeneration of a workers' state and from the parasitism of the ruling bureaucracy upon the nationalised and planned economy. Trotsky held that this gave the Stalinist bureaucracy a dual role. The two main pillars of the IC - Healy and Lambert - asserted that the Stalinist bureaucracy was counter-revolutionary 'through and through?'. The iSt/ICL, belatedly adopting Pablo's method, claim that Stalinism has a dual character which enables it sometimes to act in a progressive, sometimes in a reactionary way. Faced with the destruction of planned property relations, Stalinophobe tendencies refuse all possibility of a united front with sections of Stalinism against the restorationists. Similarly, stalinophiles such as the iSt/ICL and their brethren look to the Stalinist bureaucracy as the only possible defender of the planned property relations. Both tendencies misunderstand the contradictory nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which has a predominantly counter-

revolutionary character.

To be true to Trotsky's method, revolutionaries must struggle against Stalinism in all the arenas of the class struggle. But this must not lead to a refusal to operate the united front tactic where the Stalinists act against the proletariat's class enemies, if only for a moment, and where they (mis)lead sections of the proletariat. Despite the centrality of the programme of political revolution, a united front may prove necessary with the Stalinists, or a section of them, against restorationist forces, when and if the Stalinists are willing to defend the gains of the workers' state.

19 The caste rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy rested on a dictatorship over the working class and the systematic plunder of the planned property relations. The mismanagement of the planned economy in the USSR and Eastern Europe has brought it to a dead end. This has created a revolutionary crisis in which proletarian political revolution is the only alternative to social counter-revolution. The acute crisis of leadership has given the initiative to the restorationist forces, but their triumph is not assured or inevitable.

During its first two decades of existence, the soviet economy was relatively dynamic. This was the result of working class enthusiasm for the building and defence of the workers' state, as well as due to the Stalinist terror which restrained the bureaucracy's parasitism. Acute crises of disproportion and disequilibrium existed, however, caused by the blind nature of command planning. In the 1950s and 1960s the bureaucracy threw off the terror, replaced Stalinist 'egalitarianism' with the promotion of inequalities and promise to duplicate the mass consumerism of the imperialist countries. Trapped within the confines of socialism in one country, the sclerotic bureaucracy was unable to catch up with the capitalist world economy. The growth of the productive forces dipped below the average for the capitalist world. After 1975 chronic stagnation set in.

Leading sections of the bureaucracy increasingly lost faith in the centrally planned economy. Faced with no alternative, the Gorbachev leadership embarked on the fatal twin track of democratisation and marketisation. But the reforms of glasnost and perestroika did not dynamise the economy or raise productivity. They only produced chaos, nationalist agitation, strikes, and a challenge to the privileges and power of large sections of the bureaucracy. The caste split into open factions. Bureaucratic conservatives who had no alternative to Gorbachev, except to go slower and save their own jobs, blocked the reforms. In the Republics of the oppressed nationalities, the bureaucracy either split from Moscow and took on a nationalist character or was rapidly ousted.

The same process occurred in Eastern Europe. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the DDR, non-Stalinist restorationist forces used the economic failures of the old regime and national and democratic slogans to mobilise the masses and oust the bureaucracy from power. In Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia the Stalinists renounced 'communism', used nationalism as a legitimating ideology and retained their leadership of the workers and peasants on the basis of promising a restoration that would not harm their fundamental interests.

In all these states the proletariat today faces restorationist governments attempting to destroy the central planning and distribution mechanisms in order to allow the uninhibited operation of the law of value. A mixed economy of state capitalist trusts and private enterprises is the first stage after restoration. East Germany leapt into this stage by economic union, closely followed by political fusion with the premier European imperialism. The other countries will follow a more agonising road: hyper-inflation, mass unemployment and the destruction of a majority of industry will all take place unless the proletariat acts. A profound revolutionary period involving revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations will accompany the attempts at restoration. Revolutionaries must resolve the proletariat's crisis of leadership.

The planned property relations identify the bureaucratic regimes as having the class character of a workers' state. Stalinist political power and totalitarian dictatorship are not an essential feature. Stalinists can hold power for years without transforming the state they rule into workers' states (Eastern Europe 1945-1948). The driving of the Stalinists from political power does not mean that the workers' state has been transformed into a capitalist state. As long as the decisive elements of the means of production remain state property and operate according to bureaucratic planning rather than the law of value, the workers' state has not been definitively overthrown.¹ Large scale privatisation is not a necessary part of restoration. The restoration of capitalism centres on the destruction of the plan and its associated non-commercial banking and credit system. When the decisive majority of the state trusts produce on the basis of profitability or commercial loans then they assume a state capitalist character.

20 A political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy is necessary in all the degenerate workers' states. Integrally combined with this task is the defence of the planned property relations against the restorationist forces and governments that have taken political power in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Independent working class parties with a Leninist-Trotskyist programme must be constructed to accomplish this successfully.

The task of the political revolution is to preserve and complete the dictatorship of the proletariat by destroying the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. In all states where the bureaucracy holds power either totally or partially, this remains the central task. In 1989-1991 revolutionary communist forces should have led the assault on the hated Stalinist dictatorships. In their absence, pro-capitalist restorationist forces, at first cloaked as classless 'democrats', were able to seize the initiative and establish their hegemony over the masses. It was essential to expose and break the hold of the restorationist forces. This was the case when the restorationists were fighting for democratic rights and even when Trotskyists stood in a limited bloc with them against the Stalinist tanks and secret police.

Without the destruction of the Stalinist dictatorship over the proletariat and the peasants, no possibility of political revolution exists. This revolution cannot be accomplished by reforms alone: the bureaucracy has to be forcibly removed from power. The bureaucratic-military state machine is not a capitalist state in terms of the property relations it defends (its class character). In its form and structure, however, it is an alien, bourgeois formation that needs to be smashed and replaced with the commune type semi-state envisaged by Marx, Engels and Lenin.

In Eastern Europe and the USSR, a period of dual power between conservative bureaucratic elements resting on the planned property relations and the open restorationists resting on the new bourgeoisie was opened up by the revolutionary events of 1989-91. In general power has been vested in the bourgeois-democratic parliaments inherited from the Stalinists. The proletariat does not constitute an independent pole of this dual power. The new unions, which as yet only represent a minority of the proletariat, support the bourgeois restorationist faction.

We reject the opportunist and processist theory of the LIT that the whole of the period since 1989 constitutes a 'February' stage of the political revolution which will evolve inevitably towards an 'October'. This view ignores the reality that there are no workers' councils or revolutionary parties anywhere in Eastern Europe and that for the moment the initiative lies with the restorationists. Worse, it ignores the fact that counter-revolutionary governments are in power and are attacking the planned property relations, that the social counter-revolution has begun.

The establishment of bourgeois democratic rights, the legalisation of parties, the freedom of the press, the freedom of assembly and demonstration and the ability to create trade unions independent of the state and party, all allow revolutionary communists to organise and to agitate amongst the masses. These rights also

imply a grave danger if the restorationist forces can deceive the masses into supporting their elevation to power and the carrying out of their programme. We do not fight for, or support the creation of, bourgeois parliamentary institutions in any degenerate workers' state. We reject the calls by the LIT and the USFI for constituent assemblies and parliaments whilst the workers' state still survives. We also reject the USFI and FI-ICR's call for bourgeois democratic 'pluralism'. The bourgeois restorationists have no inalienable right to actively organise for the overthrow of the workers' state. Calls for 'pluralism' devoid of class content sow crass democratic illusions and obscure the very necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on organs of working class democracy. We reject the pseudo-radical assertion made by Moreno in 1978, that the suppression of all pro-capitalist political forces is a matter of principle. The only guiding principle is the effective defence of the workers' state by the actions of the workers' themselves.

Against all forms of parliamentarism we fight for a superior form of democracy: workers' council democracy. This alone can safeguard and transform the proletariat's gains. Starting from the proletariat's demands for greater social equality and the abolition of privilege, and for democracy in the workplace, in the unions and in society, Trotskyists must fight for real workers' councils as an alternative to the fake parliaments or 'soviets'. However, as long as the great majority of the masses have illusions in the democratic rights and institutions then we have to defend them against the military coups or police repression of the hardline faction of the bureaucracy. We have to use democratic and transitional demands to expose the undemocratic nature of bourgeois parliamentarism.

Where the Stalinist bureaucracy still clings on to its dictatorship we must fight during the inevitable uprisings for the immediate creation of democratic workers' councils and for the right of the workers and peasants alone to decide which parties are theirs by elections in the workplaces and proletarian and peasants' areas. All bureaucrats must be excluded from these organs and the executive power must arise from them and be answerable to them. This programme of political revolution must be counterposed to all wings of Stalinism, whether liberal and democratising or hard line. New revolutionary parties need to be built on this programme.

We reject the open denial of the need for political revolution in countries like Cuba and Vietnam on the grounds that Castro and Ho Chi Minh 'made revolutions' and that their regimes simply 'lack the forms of proletarian democracy'. They lack not only the form (workers' councils) but also the content, the direct political power of the proletariat. Cuba faces a growing crisis which is of key importance to revolutionaries in Latin America. In both economic policy and its support for reactionary imperialist 'solutions' in Nicaragua, Colombia, El Salvador, Namibia, South Africa and Israel, Cuba is turning to imperialism. It supported the first UN sanctions against Iraq. Castro's only hard line 'anti-imperialist' policies have been viciously anti-working class-his support for Ceausescu, Honecker and the Tiananmen massacre. The only way to save the Cuban workers' state is through a political revolution led by an anti-Castro Trotskyist party. None of the major degenerate fragments of the Fourth International dare call for this. Even supposed 'lefts' like Socialist Action (USA) equivocate on the question. We reject the historical adaptation of the USFI and all its fragments to Castro. We oppose the opportunist distortion of Trotskyism which calls only for a multi-party parliament in Cuba (USFI) or drops all call for political revolution, concentrating on the slogan of the defence of Cuba against imperialist pressure (POR(Lora), FI-ICR).

The crisis of Stalinism has exposed the centrist method of all the pretenders to Trotsky's mantle. The USFI refused to call for the political revolution against Gorbachev or advance a programme for it. Instead it concentrated on urging a process of 'deep glasnost', mildly criticising marketisation and asserting that it was impossible for capitalism to be restored. At first uncritical of the democratic restorationist and nationalist forces, they then turned to promoting a faction within the CPSU (the Marxist Platform). Up to the very eve of the collapse of the Stalinist party, they refused to call for the building a revolutionary party in

the Soviet Union. The CWI (Militant) likewise declared the impossibility of restoration on the grounds that the workers' state represented a 'superior mode of production'. The LIT argue that the political revolution is progressing despite the installation of capitalist restorationist governments and the defeats they have inflicted on the working class. The USFI, LIT, the FI(ICR), the CWI and the WRP(GB), despite their conflicting Stalinophile or Stalinphobe standpoints, all use an identical method. They leave to a supposed objective historical process the tasks of defending the planned property relations and of exposing and fighting the restorationist forces. The mirror image of this error was shown by the iSt/ICL. First, they uncritically hailed the Chinese Democracy Movement as the political revolution. Then, in December 1989, they rushed into the arms of the Stalinists and their secret police apparatuses, urging them to crush the mass anti-bureaucratic movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR and 'save the gains of October'. Disappointed at the bureaucratic conservative faction's weakness they refrained from supporting the August 1991 coup only because it was so ineptly organised. Their more consistent offshoot, the IBT, supported it - a position that ironically put them into the same camp as the arch-Pablo-ites the Posadists.

21 Against imperialist war, only the proletarian class struggle and its victory can end the threat of nuclear annihilation.

War is endemic to imperialism. With the development of atomic weapons capitalism has discovered the means to destroy civilisation. The choice facing humanity is, in the most literal sense, 'socialism or barbarism', perhaps the total extinction of our species. This fact cannot transform the war question into an all-class or non-class issue to be answered by a special ideology or movement - pacifism. This ideology and these movements remain what they were pre-1914, or in the 1930s, petit bourgeois. They are incapable of the objective they set themselves, persuading the imperialists to lay down their arms and live peacefully or, more recently, persuading the 'superpowers' to give up their nuclear arsenals.

Only the proletariat's struggle for power can disarm those preparing a nuclear holocaust, and to do this it does not need the popular front of movements like CND. Trotskyists can and should intervene in the mass base of these movements (where they have one) to combat pacifism, to expose the clergymen, the retired generals and bourgeois politicians and to win the idealistic youth for the class struggle. We reject the USFI's view that the peace movement is 'objectively anti-capitalist'. This is an excuse for refusing to confront petit bourgeois pacifism with proletarian anti-militarism. The two cannot and must not be elided.

22 Defend Lenin's theory of imperialism and Leninist-Trotskyist tactics faced with imperialist war. The essential features of imperialism, as characterised by Lenin, the revolutionary Comintern and Trotsky's Fourth International, still exist, despite the dissolution of the formal empires of Britain and France and changes in the pattern of investment and the relative development of certain imperialised countries. A small number of imperialist powers, dominated by finance capital and huge industrial, raw material extractive, agricultural or trading monopolies dominate the economies of the imperialised countries. They repeatedly intervene around the world to set up political regimes favourable to the extraction of imperialist super-profit.

In wars or conflicts between imperialist powers and semi-colonial countries, it is the duty of revolutionaries to be defeatist in relation to the former and defencist in regard to the latter. The proletariat of the colonial or semi-colonial country should give no political support to their bourgeoisie. Indeed, in order to transform the war into a consistent anti-imperialist war, it will be necessary to overthrow the bourgeois rulers. In the conflicts between Iran and the USA revolutionaries should have supported the former despite the reactionary clerical domestic regime. In the Malvinas War, it was obligatory to be for the defeat of Britain and for the victory of Argentina despite the Galtieri dictatorship.

In the Gulf War of the US-led coalition against Iraq, it was obligatory for revolutionaries to stand for an Iraqi

victory against these forces. Despite a formal defeatist position the CWI, the ISO and the USFI, all refused to make defence of Iraq an agitational slogan during the war, preferring a 'popular front' with pacifist forces. The LIT and the ITC unconditionally supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, lending legitimacy to his diversionary expansionism. Socialist Action (USA) managed to combine both errors. After the war it was necessary to defend the uprising of the Kurds and the rest of the people of Iraq against the Ba'athist dictatorship.

In wars between semi-colonial countries waged for the economic, political or strategic aggrandisement of the national bourgeoisie, the proletariat must take a defeatist position. Defencism is permissible only if one country in particular is acting as an agent for imperialism or is attempting to violate the national self-determination and independence of another. But in this case the task of the proletariat is international solidarity with its class brothers and sisters in the 'enemy' country not the spreading of nationalist slogans and demagoguery. We condemn Lora's support for the Bolivian bourgeoisie's impotent revanchist claims for the territory of neighbouring states on the grounds that losses of the historic national territory must be made good and that the country has a right to a port on the Pacific.

The same method must apply to conflicts between degenerate workers' states. We reject siding with one Stalinist clique against another because one appears 'better'. This impressionist method led the USFI to side with Vietnam against Kampuchea instead of charting an independent course of political revolution for the masses of Indo-China. Only if imperialism is clearly backing one workers' state will we take sides, opposing that supported by finance capital. In wars by imperialism against the degenerate workers' states we defend unconditionally the workers' states.

23 Lenin's distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations is valid for our epoch. It is obligatory to defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and to support to their struggles. The proletariat must not yield to nationalism.

The collapse of the colonial empires saw the creation of new independent states in a process ultimately controlled by imperialism. Balkanisation has divided peoples, created hundreds of national minorities and left systematic racial oppression intact. Marxists oppose national oppression. We therefore support the right to self-determination and the struggles being waged around the world (e.g. the Irish in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Kurds in the various states which partition Kurdistan), without giving any political support to the nationalism of the parties carrying out these struggles, to their guerrillaist strategy or to their tactics of bombings and assassinations. These methods will not achieve liberation and will not prepare the way for working class internationalism and unity. Unconditional support for the struggle for legitimate national rights must be combined with fearless criticism of petit bourgeois nationalist politics. It is a measure of the degeneration of the USFI and IC 'traditions' that they never managed to combine the two, either collapsing into nationalist and guerrillaist illusions or denouncing nationalists as common criminals when 'terrorist actions' made life too hot for 'Trotskyists' in the imperialist heartlands.

Likewise we reject the notion that the 'interpenetration' or scattering of a people, for example the Palestinians, removes the obligation to defend their self-determination, as the iSt claim. This is a brazen excuse for abandoning a cause which is unpopular in the USA. The iSt, bending to the pressure of US imperialism, support the right of Israel to exist within its 1948 borders. They have declared their retrospective support for the Zionist state in the war which established those borders and robbed the Palestinians of their homeland. In the 1967 and 1972 wars, they refused to give military support to the Arab bourgeois states fighting the Zionist gendarme of imperialism.

The Jewish people and the Arab population in the Israeli state are not in an equal position. The Arabs are

oppressed-millions are denied re-entry to their homeland. The Israeli state is a racial-confessional state that restricts democratic rights to Jews. The Palestinian struggle for a secular democratic state must be critically supported even though Trotskyists argue that only a workers' state, an Arab and Jewish workers' state as part of a socialist federation of the Middle East, can resolve the national question and exclude imperialism from the Middle East. We condemn the sectarian and opportunist attitudes to the Palestinian national struggle. The LIT combines both, uncritically espousing the PLO popular front's goal of a bourgeois state and calling for the driving of the Israeli-Jewish workers into the sea, a position which would clearly prevent working class unity.

24 The right of nations to self-determination is a bourgeois right. The proletariat must continue to support this right even in those states where it has seized power in order to win the proletariat of the oppressed nationalities to support for the creation and the extension of the workers state. Recognition of this right is applicable throughout the entire transition period.

The victorious proletariat can as Engels said 'force no blessings on another nation'. However, the military necessities of revolutionary uprising, civil war or imperialist intervention may necessitate the temporary violation of this right.

The proletariat should therefore recognise unconditionally the right to self-determination of an oppressed nation or ethnic group, even if this nation should then proceed to restore capitalism. This was the position of Lenin with regard to Finland and the Baltic States after 1917. Where independence movements in a workers' state are led by bourgeois forces, revolutionaries must try to win the proletariat of an oppressed nation to the defence of planned property relations. The best way to achieve this is to remove the roots of the bourgeois nationalists' influence, the forcible retention of the nation within the state borders of the workers' state. This will aid the proletariat of the seceding nation to retain or to recover state power.

The military-strategic necessities of a workers' state faced with attack by imperialism or civil war, or the general interests of the international revolution, may make it necessary to violate the right to self-determination in specific instances but they do not constitute a permanent negation of this right. In the degenerate workers' states we do not advocate the creation of independent or autonomous workers' council republics as a general or universal rule. We fight for a democratic centralised planned economy and a federation of workers' states. However, when the workers of a particular nationality are convinced that they need a separate state and desire for secession is deeply rooted in the masses, we are obliged to support an independent workers' council republic. With this slogan we should try to convince the population to oppose the capitalist nationalists, preparing the conditions for a new, genuine and democratic federation of workers' states. We have to oppose any oppression or expulsion of minorities by the nationalist governments of these new states.

Stalinophilic tendencies, notably the iSt (ICL), shamelessly abandoned the position of the Bolsheviks and Trotsky during the post 1989 crisis of the USSR. They supported repression by the Stalinists in three Baltic states and in the Caucasus. They converted Trotsky's support for an 'independent Soviet Ukraine' into a conditional right. The sectarians will only recognise the right to self-determination if the oppressed nations give a prior commitment to maintain the workers' state and if they already have a proletarian leadership.

They reinforce nationalist illusions, increase the influence of the reactionary nationalists and create resentment and divisions within the working class. They put self-determination within a purely bourgeois democratic framework. They abhor the slogan of an independent workers' republic. They refuse the possibility of making limited united fronts with Stalinist armed forces to defend national minorities or against pogroms as in Azerbaijan. Against such sectarianism, revolutionaries stand by the Bolsheviks' own interpretation, as explained in the ABC of Communism, of the right of self-determination of the peoples and

republics of a federal or ?multi-national? workers? state: this right included the right to secession. The denial of this right is itself a form of national oppression, even where revolutionaries themselves do not advocate secession.

25 The struggles of women, youth, the racially oppressed and lesbian and gay minorities must be supported.

Where the oppressed campaign against elements of their oppression, Trotskyists must seek to involve the organised labour movement. Politically ?autonomous? movements based on all class/no class ideologies (feminism etc) are a blind alley for the oppressed. The reformist leaderships of the unions and the workers? parties systematically neglect and exclude the oppressed. Communists oppose these prejudices and seek to put the mass organisations of the working class in the forefront of the struggle against oppression. Special methods of agitation, propaganda and forms of work need to be used to win the socially oppressed to the communist programme. Special forms of organisation may be necessary both to mobilise them to fight their own oppression and to enable them to enter the ranks of the organised workers? movement on an equal basis with all other workers. Specific united fronts, caucuses and even mass movements of the oppressed may need to be built, composed primarily of proletarians and based within, or oriented centrally to, the existing mass working class organisations. They must be proletarian movements. They must be committed to the defence of the interests of the oppressed and mortally hostile to non-proletarian strategies proposed by bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements amongst the oppressed. Trotskyists fight openly for leadership of such movements: without such leadership reformism or centrism will dissipate the fighting capacity of the oppressed. The struggle to abolish racism, women?s oppression, the oppression of youth and of lesbians and gays can only be victorious when the proletariat takes up these struggles as its own. Only then will it be possible to overcome separatist petit bourgeois ideologies (feminism, black nationalism, indigenism etc).

26 Capitalism destroys the environment and the health and welfare of the working masses.

Limited safety measures can be imposed by the class struggle but only working class power can abolish the perpetual menace to the environment posed by the existence of capitalism.

The ecological movements have raised and sought to combat dangers to the environment from the nuclear power industry, the chemical industry and many others. Nevertheless, these movements fail to root the cause of these problems in capitalist industrial production. While some immediate measures, such as safety improvements or pollution controls, may be taken up by the working class, these movements raise all of these demands in the context of a utopian programme which stresses zero economic growth, retrogressive sources of power, the relinquishing of scientific agriculture, a ?return to nature? and other petit bourgeois fantasies. At best, they ignore or fail to recognise the centrality of the organisations of the working class. At worst, they attack these organisations, seeking instead to create all-class/no-class popular frontist type campaigns or even parties. These remain bourgeois and cannot be supported in elections. We reject the USFI?s policy of fighting for coalitions between workers? and green parties. In certain circumstances it is possible to have unity in action with the petit bourgeois movements in pursuit of limited objectives (for example the demand for a workers? enquiry, the fight to introduce safety measures, the abolition of certain reactionary laws) to be fought for by direct action including demonstrations and strikes. We also reject a maximalist attitude towards safety and the environment. These are issues for the proletariat?s immediate and transitional programmes. They must be a part of the objectives of the fight for workers? control and inspection not simply an ?issue to be dealt with under socialism?.

27 A Leninist vanguard party is indispensable. Such a party must be based on an international transitional programme which links historic goal and principles to fundamental tactics in an overall strategy for working class power. Only the proletariat can create a healthy workers? state. The revolutionary party has to be

rooted in this class and express its historical aims.

We reject all attempts to replace the Leninist party with the organisation of worker and peasant, peasant or poor people's parties. In Peru during the 1960s the peasant rebellion was misled by Moreno and the USFI with the theory which sought to substitute a party based on the peasant unions for a Bolshevik workers' party. Today, in Bolivia, the LIT promote the creation of an indigenist party based on multi-class peasant unions. The centrist fragments of the Fourth International have repeatedly sought short cuts to party building via opportunist fusions with non-Trotskyist forces. All these experiences have ended in fiasco or catastrophe. The USFI created the Chilean MIR and the Argentinian PRT as part of their 1960s strategy of building 'united Castroite parties'. The result was that these parties developed in a Stalinist direction, expelling their 'Trotskyist' founders. The LIT dissolved its Colombian section into the guerrillaist A Luchar. In the 1980s, the USFI dissolved many of its sections into reformist parties or involved them in fusions with right centrist/left reformist sects or parties (VSP in Germany, PUM in Peru, A Luchar in Colombia etc). The LIT, with their strategic conception of a mass legal centrist party in Argentina, has repeatedly sought fusions with different forces emerging from social democracy (the PST in the 1970s the PST, the MAS in the 1980s). This policy is even more dangerous in the degenerate workers' states where failure to be clear on the defence of planned property relations has led the FI-ICR to create social democratic groupings and 'democratic' circles. Likewise the USFI participate in openly restorationist organisations (e.g. Czechoslovakia). The LIT asserted that the Polish PPSRD, which has a social democratic programme for self-managed capitalism, was a revolutionary, semi-Trotskyist party that could lead a proletarian revolution.

The FI-ICR have recently set up a series of fake 'workers' parties' with purely bourgeois democratic slogans. Sometimes these parties involve only their own forces, sometimes they are the result of fusion with handfuls of left bureaucrats and reformists. The workers' party tactic is applicable where there are no existing mass workers' parties² and where the working class is trying to break with the bourgeoisie, often through mass trade union action (USA 1930s, South Africa and Brazil in the 1980s). In fighting for the creation of a workers' party, we propose that it be based on the revolutionary programme: the nature of the party will be determined by the struggle between revolutionaries and reformist and centrist tendencies.

28 Democratic centralism in the tradition of Lenin remains the only possible basis for revolutionary parties and for the revolutionary international.

Federalism within an international or a national party grants effective autonomy to sections or regional organisations. It negates democratic centralism and creates potentially antagonistic blocs which will inevitably clash and split, as shown by both the IC and the USFI. Permanent factionalism also negates democratic centralism. If factionalism persists then it implies that an organisation is in fact split along programmatic, or even clique, grounds and as such needs to put its house in order if it is to be able to function as a democratic centralist organisation instead of being permanently divided against itself.

Factions, as Trotsky said, are a 'necessary evil' of party life not, as the USFI seeks to portray them, a permanent and desirable feature of it.

Healthy democratic centralism rests on a revolutionary programme and the ability to defend its strategy against revision whilst adapting it tactically to intervention in the class struggle. Unity in action and strict discipline assure the verification or falsification of the party's perspectives and tactic through the living practice of the membership. Freedom of discussion and collective democratic decision-making allow errors to be corrected with the minimum of disruption. Regime and politics are integrally linked. In the mass proletarian organisations the omnipotence of Stalinist bureaucrats, of social democratic parliamentarians or of trade union functionaries represents the pressure of alien class forces within the workers' movement. Centrism wastes and squanders its cadre through dead-end factionalism and clique squabbles, destructive splits and unprincipled combinations. The post 1948 Fourth International and the IS and IC traditions show

these characteristic violations of democratic centralist norms. The histories of the USFI, the FI-ICR and the LIT abound with examples of organisational bankruptcy. The USFI tradition has a tendency to mimic a social democratic internal regime, the IC a Stalinist one, but both are violently intolerant of revolutionary criticism and both happily violate democratic centralism to silence it.

29 A revolutionary party is a serious combat organisation, organising in its ranks a significant proportion of the vanguard fighters of the proletariat. Calling sectarian propaganda societies 'parties' discredits the real thing in the eyes of the vanguard.

So great was the crisis of revolutionary leadership from the beginning of the 1930s that in most countries revolutionary communism was thrown back to the stage of small propaganda groups. Whilst Trotsky lived, the Fourth International gave them a firm programmatic basis. With the FI's degeneration and disintegration this disappeared. The key task over the past decades has been to recover and develop that programmatic basis, not only by theoretical and polemical work and struggle but by active intervention in the class struggle. This remains the key task for revolutionaries today. It is the task of a fighting propaganda group.

The centrist epigones of the Fourth International either dissolved themselves into the 'left-wing' of social democracy (and sometimes Stalinism) in the 1950s and again in the 1970s and 80s, or they proclaimed propaganda groups of a few hundred (perhaps a few thousand) to be mass parties. These 'mini-mass parties' vainly tried to counterpose themselves to reformism at all levels-daily papers, electoral slates, presidential candidates, youth organisations etc. in a manner redolent of Stalinism in its 'Third Period' (e.g. WRP, LCR). The result was a rapid throughput of uneducated members, the exhaustion and squandering of cadres and the creation of a bureaucratic or federalist regime. Revolutionary realism must reject this heritage as it must reject the featureless 'secret entrism'. Both have discredited Trotskyism. Nor is the answer a sectarian abstentionism in the name of propagandism in the manner of the iSt, who have turned themselves into a quasi-Bordigist sect whose only 'fighting' is hyper-factional attempts to destroy their 'rivals'.

A fighting propaganda group is obliged by its size and its programmatic tasks to prioritise the task of producing material primarily for the most politically conscious vanguard elements, educating and training a cadre and participating as a revolutionary opposition in the mass struggles of the working class. In doing so it may have to use various organisational tactics: total entry as open revolutionaries into reformist parties or an independent organisation performing fraction work in all the mass workers' organisations. Its objective is to win to its ranks ever more vanguard fighters.

This method of individual recruitment can and must be combined with a positive orientation to leftward moving splits from reformist and centrist organisations. The whole history of Bolshevik and Trotskyist party building indicates that through splits, fusions and, if necessary further splits, the genuine communists can take important steps towards building a party rooted inside the working class.

30 All the major 'Trotskyist' currents are centrist. An intransigent struggle against them is necessary. The task is not to re-unify, or reconstruct the Fourth International with these misleaders but to found a new Leninist-Trotskyist International, on a newly elaborated programme. Whether this organisation is called the Fourth or the Fifth International is not a principled question. The key question is that of programme.

Centrism oscillates between reform and revolution. The degeneration of revolutionary organisations produces a rightward moving descent into centrism. Revolutionary crises and struggles engender leftward movements from reformism which, if they do not immediately come over to the communist movement, can constitute left centrist organisations. We must combine a merciless struggle against right centrism, which is moving away from Marxism, with a serious attempt to win leftward moving centrist organisations towards

consistent communism, towards a reborn Trotskyist organisation.

The centrism of degeneration, e.g. Kautskyism, Stalinism (pre 1934), the POUM, exists in many forms. Each specific centrism bears the marks of its origin. To centrism of a social democratic and Stalinist origin has been added centrism of a Trotskyist origin. This form of centrism has generally taken the form of an ossified centrism, isolated from the mass struggles of the working class, unable or unwilling to test its politics in struggle, and relatively impervious to change. Centrism of a 'Trotskyist' origin is not inherently more progressive than any other form. In the massive upheavals which are following the collapse of Stalinism, all forms of centrism will be put to the test and will be found wanting. We reject any notion of the automatic, spontaneous evolution of centrism into revolutionary communism. The fight against centrism must be conscious and result in a break from it and a recognition of it as a past condition of an organisation or current: a self-critical balance sheet must be drawn. As Trotsky said, 'centrism hates to hear itself named'. It is a feature of the centrist international currents (children of the 'London Bureau' rather than Trotsky's FI) that to so characterise them is to guarantee a cessation of discussion, exclusion from a conference or expulsion from their ranks.

The LRCI puts forward the slogan 'Forward to the refounding of a Leninist-Trotskyist International'. Like Trotsky in relation to the Third International and Lenin before him in relation to the Second, we do not fetishise the Fourth International. The banner of the Fourth has been dragged through the mud by centrism. The vast majority of those who cling to the old banner of the Fourth do so because they believe in a 'continuity'. They are unwilling to recognise the centrist politics of all the fragments of the Fourth International after 1951. They fail to combat centrism and are therefore doomed to repeat its mistakes.

We do not rule out the possibility that, under the hammer blows of the class struggle and the active intervention in the Fourthist currents by an international Trotskyist tendency, the major centrist formations that claim to be Fourth Internationalist will be broken up and sections of their militants won to revolutionary communism. Such circumstances might allow for a principled regroupment under the banner of a programmatically and organisationally rebuilt Fourth International. Neither do we rule out the possibility of a refounded International that proclaims itself the Fifth, standing in the revolutionary traditions of the first four internationals. This question will be decided in future struggles.

We seek to win all those who recognise the necessity of this task. We appeal to all those who share this view within the centrist, pseudo-Trotskyist organisations to join us in this fight inside or outside their parties and 'internationals'. We seek to unite our forces with all organisations which have waged and are waging a principled fight against the centrism of Pablo, Mandel, Healy, Lambert, Moreno, Lora, Cliff, Grant etc. We must discuss not for the sake of discussion but to establish a basis for programmatic unity. The LRCI has its own programme The Trotskyist Manifesto and it practices democratic centralism internationally, but it presents neither as an ultimatum. We are willing to participate in discussions aimed at revolutionary unity on the basis of a commitment to work toward a re-elaborated transitional programme of world revolution and the refoundation of a Leninist-Trotskyist International.

Endnotes

1 . 'This formulation, which gave way to the 'moribund workers state theory', was eventually over turned and rejected at the World Congress in 2000. The Congress argued that the key feature of the ex-Stalinist countries was that the state was defending the economic transition to capitalism, not that the economic base was still largely nationalised.' Therefore, contrary to this formulation, capitalism was being, or had been restored in the ex-Stalinists countries by the time this resolution was written.

2 . When these theses were written, we had not considered the possible use of the tactic where a bourgeois workers' party already existed but, as a result of experience of its betrayals in office, large

sectors of the class, including key elements of the vanguard, had withdrawn their support but not transferred their allegiance to another working class party. Within the last 10 years, however, this has been the situation in a number of European countries such as Germany, Britain and France, and this has led the League to develop the tactic of the 'New Workers' Party' based on the method of the 'Labor Party Tactic'. That means calling on the labour movement and, especially the trade unions, to take the initiative in founding a 'New Workers' Party' whose programme, as in the 'Labor Party Tactic', will be decided by struggle between revolutionary and reformist currents.

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